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Top Secret 219

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Saturday 21 January 1978

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Saturday, 21 January 1978.

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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USSR: Boris Ponomarev's Visit

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[] Boris Ponomarev, a veteran Soviet ideologist and candidate member of the Politburo, arrives in Washington tomorrow as head of a delegation of representatives of the USSR Supreme Soviet (parliament).

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[] After discussions with members of Congress, the delegation is scheduled to make a brief tour of several American cities before returning home at the beginning of next month.

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[] Ponomarev, who headed a similar group in May 1974 in the first of a series of US-Soviet legislative exchanges, plays an influential role in Soviet foreign policy matters. He is responsible for supervising Moscow's relations with non-ruling Communist parties throughout the world. He heads the delegation because he holds the largely ceremonial post of chairman of one of the Supreme Soviet's two foreign affairs commissions.

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[] The group of officials includes the head of TASS and two close advisers to the Soviet leadership on US and Western affairs--the directors of the Institute of the USA and Canada and the Institute of World Economics and International Relations. []

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UK: Liberal Party to Vote

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[redacted] //A special assembly of the British Liberal Party today is expected to give party leader David Steel the option to continue the party's pact with the minority Labor government at least until mid-summer and perhaps into the fall parliamentary session. Continued cooperation between the Liberals and Labor will give Prime Minister Callaghan some freedom in deciding when to call the next general election.//

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[redacted] //Many rank and file members of the Liberal Party urged in mid-December that the pact be broken because they believed that the government had reneged on its pledge to push for proportional representation in elections for the European Parliament. Most party leaders and members of the party's parliamentary delegation, however, believed that Labor had done enough to allow the party to save face. They were fully aware, moreover, that the failure of the party to support the government could mean early elections and almost certain losses in the 13-seat Liberal parliamentary delegation.//

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[redacted] //The Liberals fared poorly in most by-elections held last year, and their standing in the opinion polls has declined over the past several months. Many party purists believe that the pact, by forcing the party to compromise some of its principles, has contributed to the Liberals' poor showing, and they are the prime movers behind the campaign to end the accord.//

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[redacted] //Steel, on the other hand, sees the pact as the only way the Liberals can influence government policy. If the assembly today does give him, in consultation with the parliamentary delegation, the freedom to decide when to end the accord, he may be able to convince Callaghan to grant some small concessions on legislation important to the Liberals. Callaghan in most votes can count on the support of various small parties, such as the Scottish Nationalists, but the continuation of a somewhat formal pact with the Liberals will give him latitude in deciding when to call the next general election. [redacted]

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